

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3059

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DEPT ALSO PASS TO EUR/EX

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ABLD, AFSP, ASEC, ACOM

SUBJECT: PROPOSED EMBASSY SITE

REF: SOFIA 0662

1. AMBASSADOR AND ADMIN OFFICER MET JUNE 7 WITH DEPUTY MINISTER ILIEV, HEAD OF BUREAU FOR SERVICES TO DIPLOMATIC CORPS (BODK), AT LATTER'S REQUEST TO DISCUSS STATUS ACQUISITION SOFIA CHANCERY SITE. ILIEV ENUMERATED THE MANY SITES WHICH HAVE BEEN OFFERED TO US, TOUTING ESPECIALLY THE ADVANTAGES OF THE PROPERTY ON ISKAR STREET (SITE #10) AND ON KUTLOVITSA STREET (SITE #11) AND RECALLING SPECIAL CONCESSIONS BODK WAS PREPARED TO MAKE TO US. HE WANTED TO KNOW WHETHER USG WAS PREPARED TO FINALIZE THE NEGOTIATIONS AS GOB WISHES TO MOVE IN PARALLEL FOR ACQUISITION OF A BULGARIAN CHANCERY SITE IN THE VAN NESS INTERNATIONAL CENTER AFTER NEGOTIATIONS FOR AN EXISTING BUILDING IN WASHINGTON HAD FALLEN THROUGH.

2. AMB ACKNOWLEDGED ILIEV HAD PUT HIMSELF OUT FOR US AND THAT SITE #10 WAS CERTAINLY BEST THAT HAD BEEN SHOWN TO US. THAT HAD ALSO BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED BY FBO EXPERTS. HOWEVER
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WASHINGTON CONSIDERS THAT NONE RPT NONE OF THE SITES OFFERED SO FAR HAD MET OUR REQUIREMENTS WITH REGARD TO CENTRAL PRESTIGE LOCATION. ILIEV REMONSTRATED THAT CITY PLANS WOULD PUT BOTH SITES 10 AND 11 IN SUCH LOCATION BUT AMB SAID THAT HE HAD HIMSELF SEEN OUR CHANCERIES IN MOSCOW, WARSAW, EAST BERLIN, PRAGUE, BELGRADE, AND BUDAPEST AND COULD UNDERSTAND WHY OUR RECOMMENDATION TO WASHINGTON HAD

NOT BEEN ACCEPTED. THE FBO TEAM HAD ASKED, FOR INSTANCE, WHY WE COULD NOT HAVE THE SITE NEAR ALEKSANDUR NEVSKY CATHEDRAL WHICH THE SOVIET EMBASSY HAD RELINQUISHED. ILIEV SAID THAT WAS DEFINITELY RULED OUT BECAUSE ENTIRE AREA WILL BE REDEVELOPED INTO PARKS, ETC.

3. AMB THEN SAID THAT IN INTEREST OF FRIENDLY RELATIONS IT IS SOMETIMES NECESSARY TO SPEAK A BIT BLUNTLY. RECOGNIZING THAT ILIEV HAD DONE ALL IN HIS POWERS, PERHAPS OUR MISTAKE HAD BEEN MADE IN NOT GOING TO HIGHER LEVEL. ILIEV WAS VISIBLY TAKEN ABACK. AMB SAID A TRULY "HEROIC" EFFORT IS REQUIRED TO COME UP WITH A SUITABLE SITE, AND IT IS OBVIOUS THAT IF IT IS TO PASS MUSTER "IT WILL HAVE TO BE TAKEN AWAY FROM SOMEONE ELSE." WE ARE IN NO POSITION TO TELL WHO THAT SHOULD BE, BUT SITE THAT COULD WIN WASHINGTON APPROVAL WOULD HAVE TO BE COMPARABLE IN LOCATION TO THAT OF SOVIET, BRITISH, FRENCH, JAPANESE AND WEST GERMAN EMBASSIES. ILIEV CLAIMED THAT SITES 10 AND 11 MEET THIS REQUIREMENT, AMBASSADOR SAID THEY MIGHT SOMETIME IN FUTURE BUT PRESENTLY DO NOT.

4. DURING THIS CONVERSATION WE DID NOT ASK FOR FIRM OPTION ON SITE 10, NOR FOR COST DATA AS CALLED FOR IN REFTTEL, BECAUSE IT WAS OUR JUDGMENT THAT TO DO SO WOULD LESSEN THE ZEAL OF ILIEV IN LOOKING FOR SOMETHING MORE ATTRACTIVE. SITE 10 IS STILL AVAILABLE, AND IN ENDING THE CONVERSATION AMB REMARKED THAT HE HOPED IT WOULD NOT BE GIVEN TO SOMEONE ELSE SINCE HE EXPECTED TO BE IN WASHINGTON IN AUGUST AND WOULD EXPLAIN WHY IT IS THE BEST AMONG THOSE OFFERED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO US; BUT SINCE NOBODY DISPUTES THAT, THE QUESTION IS STILL WHY SOMETHING BETTER COULD NOT HAVE BEEN OFFERED TO US. THAT QUESTION WOULD HAVE TO BE ADDRESSED, EVEN IF IT INVOLVES PAINFUL DECISIONS.

5. EMBASSY CANNOT DISAGREE WITH OBSERVATIONS FBO REPS MADE CONCERNING SOME UNDESIRABLE FEATURES OF SITE 10. CERTAINLY OUR CURRENT LOCATION IS VASTLY SUPERIOR, BUT IT IS CRAMPED, INEFFICIENTLY DISPOSED FOR FLOW OF WORK AND VISITORS, AND PRESENTS MAJOR SECURITY DRAWBACKS. UNFORTUNATELY, ACQUIRING A DOWNTOWN BUILDING AND THEN RECONDITIONING IT SEEMS OUT OF THE QUESTION. HOPEFULLY ILIEV IS UNDER SUCH PRESSURE TO CONSUMMATE A CASHLESS EXCHANGE WITH USG AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE MOMENT THAT HE MAY YET COME UP WITH SUPERIOR SITE OR SITES. AFTER WE HAVE NOW PUT THE HEAT ON HIM ONE FACTOR WHICH WORRIES US IS WHAT HAPPENS IF THE GOB PRESENTS US WITH A SITE WHICH WE COULD NOT POSSIBLY TURN DOWN AND ASKS US TO "PUT OUR MONEY WHERE OUR MOUTH IS." THEREFORE, WE WILL APPRECIATE: (A) CURRENT READING

RE APPROPRIATION REQUEST FOR ACQUISITION OF A SITE FOR
FY 78, AND (B) ANY INFORMATION DEPT CAN PROVIDE ABOUT
STATUS OF ACQUISITION BY GOB OF VAN NESS SITE. BASED ON
ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS, WE WILL KNOW WHETHER TO STOKE
THE FIRES OR BANK THEM.
HERZ

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